9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

Even the elaborately produced and comprehensive Handbook of the Irish Free State (1927), which includes chapters on folklore and literature, remains silent on folk-culture and its significance for an understanding of Irish problems. 114

Our knowledge of the Irish countryside will advance only through field-study and the mapping of our findings. The time has not yet come when one can prepare maps of cultural distributions, but this is the end in view. Our school-books and atlases still give us maps which are purely political and administrative, for the political outlook has kept scientific interests at bay. We need maps of house-types and styles of furniture, of farm implements and the lay-out of fields and fences, of boat-types, of dialects and superstitions, and so on; and we must study these distributions both against the physical and spiritual environments of Ireland and against the wider background of their overseas connexions.

Viewed in its wider setting Ireland is part of the north-western or "Atlantic" province of European folk-culture. The climatic background of storms and mists makes it one with the coastlands and peninsulas which range from Galicia through Brittany and Highland Britain to the fiords of Norway. Everywhere in this region the sea is close at hand: by it man can both gain a livelihood and escape out into a wider world. On land the cultivation of wheat is near its climatic limits, and the dependence on spring-sown cereals greatly simplified the old schemes of crop-rotation. The folding of stock around the winter homestead was not complicated by the necessity of protecting the corn from their depredations. Animal husbandry and stock products are the pivot of rural economy in this humid fringe of Europe, a fact which, together with the independence nourished by man's association with the sea, helped to keep the north-western province out of the bondage of the feudal system. 101 ●

While the simplicity of stock-raising equipment has limited the development of the arts and crafts as compared with, say, the south-eastern province of Europe, or even lowland England, it brings its compensations. As Professor 181

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

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Fig. 1. Ireland and the seaways of "Atlantic" Europe.

The routes from the south brought ancient civilization to the island about 2000 B.C.

[p. 9]

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942
ER6 Rural Irish ER6

CHAPTER II.

HOW IRELAND TOOK SHAPE.

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131 "To comprehend the homestead and its home-folk, from the thatch of the roof to the colour of the children's hair, we must find the locality on the domed surface of the earth, and must realize that this earth is a very large and dominant region round it." So wrote the late Grenville Cole, wisest of Ireland's geographers. This island, then, lies in the warm waters of the Atlantic Ocean, midway between the Lofoten Islands and the Straits of Gibraltar, a detached but not isolated fragment of the drowned coast of Eurasia. Throughout the ages, as Europe sank repeatedly under the waters of the ocean, this outer margin, worn down by rains and rivers, received fresh marine deposits over and over again, so that its rocks record all the main features of the history of western Europe.

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175 Lying in the middle latitudes of the continent, it shares the converging mountain systems of north and south, the older axis of Scandinavia dominating the build of the north of Ireland while the younger axis linked with France and Spain prevails in the south. The lead thus given in the remote ages of geology has been followed, over and over again, by man and his cultures converging on this last outpost of Europe. From across the Atlantic, too, Ireland has received much in recent centuries; here the alien potato was first welcomed; and it was the "praty" which drove masses of Irishmen back along the route it had itself taken. "Ireland lieth aloof in

[p. 15]
[p. 14 is blank]

10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

121 The inquiry was conducted on almost exactly the same lines as that of last year; the slight differences of method being either due to changes made as the result of former experience or to local causes; but every effort was made to ensure as great uniformity as possible, a matter of much importance as facilitating comparison of results.

In this report the same headings as used in the previous one, and arranged in the same order, have been adhered to as closely as possible, so as to allow of easy reference.

II.—Physiography of the Islands.

131 The two islands under consideration, together with several small uninhabited islets, form the parish of Inishbofin; they are situated 101 outside the mouth of Killary Bay, and are distant some thirty-six miles from Westport, and about sixteen miles from Clifden, Co. Galway, the nearest town of any size. The post town is Cleggan, a small village on a point of the mainland, about seven miles from Inishbofin. Of the two main islands Inishbofin (locally called Bofin or Boffin) is much the larger, as out of the total area of the parish of 3151 acres, it contains 2312.

133 Its greatest length is about four miles, and it varies in breadth from half a mile to over two miles. The nature of its coast line is greatly varied; at some places, as at Knock-quarter or East End, being low and sandy; at others, as on the north side, and at Dun More on the western extremity, being rocky, at times rising into high and jagged cliffs worn into coves and natural bridges; while, again, in other places it is high bluff overhanging a shingly foreshore. The [504] harbour is very safe and well sheltered, and looks S.W. The coast of Shark, which lies about a mile S.W. of Inishbofin, is much more rocky, and may be said to be precipitous nearly all round, and much broken into by caves and deep fissures a few yards wide, with precipitous overhanging walls. It is difficult to land on this island if the weather be at all rough, and the inhabitants are often stormbound for weeks at a time. The difficulty and danger of landing is not so great [653] as it used to be since the building of a new pier by the Government as a relief work in 1892. Mr. Michael Lavelle, writing about the natives of this island, says:—"It is very hard for these people to live; they may be two months before they can go to Boffin to get some commands, and they live during that time on potatoes and 'white wine.'"

The principal rock of both islands is gneiss, but belts of steatite are also found.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

121 barony of Erris, county Mayo. It was at first intended that only the Parish of Kilmore, including the peninsula known as the Mullet (or Erris proper) and the Inishkea Islands should be undertaken, but unusual facilities for working the isolated district of Portacloy presenting themselves, it also was included in the inquiry.

The circumstances under which the work was carried on differed considerably from those experienced on the two previous occasions, the field being wider and the people more scattered; but the same methods were adhered to as far as possible, and this report has been drawn up on the same lines as its predecessors, in order to facilitate comparison and reference.

II.—Physiography.

131 The district dealt with in this Paper consists of two distinct localities, one clearly defined, the parish of Kilmore, the other more indefinite in 101 its boundaries, being a tract of wild mountainous country around the 631 little hamlet of Portacloy; both form part of the barony of Erris, in the extreme north-west of the Co. Mayo.

133 Kilmore includes the Mullet peninsula, the inhabited islands of North and South Inishkea, Duvillaun and Eagle Island, and a considerable number of uninhabited islets, the most remarkable of which is Inisglora (Inis Gluaire). The Mullet, or Erris proper, is a long narrow strip of land, nearly cut off from the mainland, as it is bounded on the east or landward side by Broadhaven and the magnificent Bay of Blacksod, some forty-five square miles in area, the only connection with the rest of Erris being by a narrow isthmus, about 200 yards in width. The peninsula runs nearly north and south; its extreme length is about fifteen miles, and its width varies from about seven miles in the northern part to less than half a mile near its southern extremity. The total area of the parish, including the islands, is 29,492 acres, or about 46 square miles.

The coast line, in the northern portion, consists mainly of high cliffs, indented by deep coves with precipitous and often overhanging walls, and in places pierced by caves and natural bridges. This precipitous coast extends from Broadhaven, on the north-east, round to Annagh Head on the west, a distance, following the coast line, of about thirty miles, the cliffs rising in many places to above 300 feet, and affording only three inlets of any size. Blind Harbour, on the [504] north (200 acres in area, nearly all dry at low water), and Frenchport and Scotchport on the west, the others are either inaccessible from the land side or only practicable for curraghs. Erris Head forms the

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

Plate XI.

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ANCIENT PARISHES OF COUNTY CLARE.

To face p. 180.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

Introduction

INIS BEAG is a fictitious name for one of the many inhabited islands of the Irish Gaeltacht.[1] It is a rocky, barren protuberance in the ocean, buffeted constantly by wind and storm, where 350 hardy people eke out a meager existence. This tiny island is renowned not only for the distinctive folk culture possessed by its inhabitants, but for its numerous, well-preserved antiquities which attest to at least 5000 years of almost continuous human habitation, and its great beauty of land and seascape. During the past 150 years, first scientists, then writers, and more recently film, radio, and television producers have visited Inis Beag, and their many works have served to familiarize the world with the culture, albeit romanticized, of the islanders. As a result of literary publicity, which commenced in the first decade of this century, increasing numbers of tourists have been drawn to Inis Beag over the years. The cultural forms which are most publicized and attract the most attention from tourists are the traditional garb of the folk, their skill in rowing the famed canoe, called *curach*, the manner in which they manufacture soils and grow in them a variety of crops, and their Gaelic speech.

My wife and I were introduced to Inis Beag during a short visit to Ireland in 1955, when we viewed the island from the nearby coast and talked of its cultural past and present with scholars in Dublin, Cork, and Galway. Between 1955 and 1958, we immersed ourselves in writings pertaining to Irish history and culture, and during the three summer months of the latter year we visited several peasant communities on the mainland and three islands, including Inis Beag, of the Gaeltacht. We made plans to come back to Inis Beag as soon as possible to undertake research, and in 1959 and 1960 we were able to spend the greater part of a year there, during which time we visited briefly on three occasions a neighboring island—Inis Thiar[2]—and several institutions on the mainland to conduct library and other research. We returned eight times to Inis Beag and Dublin for

[1] The Gaeltacht—areas in which 25 to 100 percent of the inhabitants speak Irish—embraces portions of 12 northern, western, and southern counties and a population of approximately 600,000 people (Freeman 1960:166).

[2] In Gaelic, Inis Thiar (also a fictitious name) means Western Isle, and Inis Beag is translated Little Isle.

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

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The most active researchers in Inis Beag have been folklorists. In 1846, 25 years before Edward Tylor pronounced his famous anthropological definition of culture, William J. Thoms introduced into English the word "folk-lore," which he defined as "the manners, customs, observances, superstitions, ballads, proverbs, etc., of the olden time." Ethnology, a scientific discipline whose focus is primitive culture in the Tylor tradition, has had for almost a century its parallel in the humanistic discipline of folklore, whose focus is the culture of the folk, or folklore, in the Thoms tradition. During this time, ethnology has evidenced a humanistic current in its concern with primitive religion, ideology, and esthetics. The discipline of folklore, on the other hand, has evidenced a scientific current, mainly in the research of scholars belonging to the "Finnish School," whose approach to cultural dynamics resembles that of the "American Historical School" of ethnology, and of eastern and northern European folklorists (who often call themselves ethnographers as well) who have been making rather broad cultural studies of peasant communities somewhat in the anthropological mold. American ethnologists employ the term folklore to designate only the oral literature of peoples—their myths, legends, folktales, anecdotes, proverbs, riddles, songs, and the like. I will employ the term in this sense when I deal with Inis Beag esthetics in Chapter 4.

Ethnology as a discipline is not represented in the universities and elsewhere in the Republic of Ireland, but folklore in the humanistic tradition is strongly developed (Delargy 1957; Dorson 1966). The deliberate recording of the immense body of folklore in Ireland began in the early part of the last century, was kindled by the Gaelic Revival, and was institutionalized in the Republic with the formation, first, of the Folklore of Ireland Society in 1926, then the Irish Folklore Institute in 1930, and finally, the Irish Folklore Commission in 1936. For many years, commission collectors have visited Inis Beag, recording mostly the oral literature and material traits, and their associated behavior, of the island folk. They have not attempted to describe and analyze functionally and dynamically the total culture of the people; moreover, their visits have been brief and intermittent, they have depended on a limited sample of respondents, and most of their queries have been guided by Sean O Suilleabhain's *A Handbook of Irish Folklore* (the Irish equivalent of the American *Outline of Cultural Materials* and British *Notes and Queries on Anthropology*), which does not include many categories of significance to anthropologists. Since my wife and I were interested primarily in the nonmaterial elements of Inis Beag culture, and since the oral literature of the folk has been well studied by commission and other folklorists, we placed less emphasis on material culture and folklore in our ethnographic work.

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The culture of Inis Beag about to be described is that of 1959 and 1960, and if I intrude data from earlier or later fieldwork I will label them as such. My wife and I also collected a large body of cultural materials in three other Irish islands, for the purposes of making cross-cultural comparisons and testing hypotheses concerning culture and personality concomitants of island living. The Inis Beag tradition is shared in large measure by the inhabitants of neighboring islands, especially those of Inis Thiar, and the several cultures together might be regarded as forming a subculture of the Irish system considered as a whole. Many of the peasant customs of Inis Beag are shared with rural peoples on the mainland, where

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16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

numerous regional subcultures exist, and some are part of a larger European matrix. In fact, as I indicated earlier, Inis Beag culture in its broadest outlines resembles other existing folk cultures. I have decided to employ English terms rather than their Gaelic counterparts whenever possible throughout the book, even though doing so will displease many Irish readers; this decision is based on the fact that most of its readers will be students of anthropology in colleges and universities in the United States. Since the islanders speak both English and Irish and command English equivalents for most Gaelic words and phrases, either language might be utilized.

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17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

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JOHN C. MESSENGER*

SEX AND REPRESSION IN AN IRISH FOLK COMMUNITY

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• [101] In this chapter I will discuss sexual repression—its manifestations in behavior and beliefs, its causes, its inculcation, and its broader historical and cultural implications—in a small island community of the Gaeltacht that I will call Inis Beag.[1] My wife and I conducted ethnographic research there for nineteen months, between 1958 and 1966, which included a one-year stay and eight other visits of from one to seven weeks—at Christmas or during the summer. Ours is the only holistic ethnographic study of this community, although archeologists, linguists, philologists, folklorists, geographers, anthropometricians, and other scientists have undertaken research there for over a century. We collected a large body of culture and personality data on three other Irish islands for the purposes of making comparisons and testing hypotheses concerning culture and personality concomitants of island living. Inis Beag is ideally suited to ethnographic and folklore research in that its population possesses a tradition which is less acculturated than that of any other local Irish group.

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[121] According to anthropological definition (Lewis 1960: 1--2), the [105] islanders qualify as folk people in almost every respect. The community 178 has maintained its stability for at least 200 years; there is a strong bond 1 between the peasants and their land, and agriculture provides them with

[122] * A grant from the Indiana University Ford International Program enabled me to write this chapter.

[1] For other reports on Inis Beag, consult Messenger 1962, 1968, and 1969.

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966)1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inis Beag

which contain a large portion of the natural flora—herbs and shrubs—of the island. Stone fences delimit many hundreds of plots which compose most of the two-square-mile land surface of Inis Beag.

The island boasts a post office with radio-telephone facilities, a "national school" in which three teachers instruct ninety pupils in the seven "standards," two provision shops with attached "pubs," a former coast guard station now housing the nurse and a knitting industry which employs local girls, a lighthouse, and a chapel served by a curate who resides nearby. Inis Beag lacks electricity and running water, and the only vehicles are several ass-drawn carts which are able to travel the narrow, fence-bordered trails. A small "steamer" carrying supplies, passengers, and mail to and from a mainland port visits the island at least once each week. That Inis Beag has experienced far less cultural change than other island communities of Ireland is largely due to the fact that, in absence of a deep water quay, the steamer has had to stand off the strand and be met by "canoes." Most of the tourists who come to the island stay only for the hours that the steamer is anchored and go ashore mainly for the thrill of riding in the canoes, which the island men row with consummate skill. Insofar as I can discover, the inhabitants of Inis Beag are less prone to visit the mainland than are the peoples of other Irish islands.

INIS BEAG
HISTORY AND CULTURE[2]

The prehistory and history of Inis Beag are recorded dramatically in a multitude of monuments and artifacts of stone and metal, including Neolithic axe-heads and kitchen middens, Copper-Bronze Age gallery grave tombs and burial mounds of earth and stone, an Iron Age promontory fort, and medieval Christian monasteries, churches, cemeteries, stone houses, and a sacred well, as well as a three-story tower house built by the political overlords of the island. Irish nativists claim that the contemporary folk are lineal descendants of ancient, once civilized

[2] The culture described herein is that of 1959–1960 and excludes important changes which have occurred since then, such as those resulting from the introduction of television, a summer language school for pupils from the mainland, and free secondary education.